

THE PICTURE OF DORIAN
GRAY. 93

palette-knife, with its thin blade of lithe steel. He had found it at last. He was going to rip up the canvas. With a stifled sob the lad leaped from the couch, and rushing over to Hallward, tore the knife out of his hand, and flung it to the end of the studio. "Don't, Basil, don't!" he cried. "It would be murder I" "I am glad you appreciate my work at last, Dorian," said the painter, coldly, when he had recovered from his surprise. "I never thought you would." "Appreciate it? I am in love with it, Basil. It is part of myself. I feel that." "Well, as soon as you are dry, you shall be varnished, and framed, and sent home. Then you can do what you like with yourself." And he walked across the room and rang the bell for tea. "You will have tea, of course; Dorian? And so will you, Harry? Or do you object to such simple pleasures?" "I adore simple pleasures," said Lord Henry. "They are the last refuge of the complex. But I don't like scenes, except on the stage. What absurd fellows you are, both of you! I wonder who it was defined man as a rational animal. It was the most premature definition ever given. Man is many things, but he is not rational. I am glad he is not, after all: though I wish you chaps would not squabble over the picture. You had much better let me have it, Basil. This silly boy doesn't really want it, and I really do." "If you let any one have it but me, Basil, I shall never forgive you!" cried Dorian Gray; "and I don't allow people to call me a silly boy." "You know the picture is yours, Dorian. I gave it to you before it existed." "And you know you have been a little silly, Mr. Gray, and that you don't really object to being reminded that you are extremely young." "I should have objected very strongly this morning, Lord Henry." "Ah! this morning! You have lived since then." There came a knock at the door, and the butler entered with a laden tea-tray and set it down upon a small Japanese table. There was a rattle of cups and saucers and the hissing of a fluted Georgian urn. Two globe-shaped china dishes were brought in by a page. Dorian Gray went over, and the two men sauntered languidly to the table, and examined what was under the covers.